Chapter I
Islamic Political Thought in India
1. Introduction

The first and foremost foundation of Islamic political thought is the Holy Quran according to which the Creator of everything including the earth and the man is Allah,\(^1\) who is the Owner, Master and Supreme Authority\(^2\); there is no sovereign except Him and none shares His sovereignty.\(^3\) Allah is the Master and Supreme Authority of the whole universe including human beings.\(^4\) Everything on earth including the human body is under divine control and accepts the authority of Allah. However, in those aspects of life where man can take decisions, Allah does not impose His authority forcibly but asks men to accept it with knowledge and consciousness. For this He sent his prophets and holy texts.

Allah is the only Sovereign and legislative authority as He is the Creator\(^5\), the Omnipotent\(^6\) and the Omniscient\(^7\). Consequently all laws which are not formulated in the light of what Allah has revealed are to be renounced.\(^8\)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) transmitted divine laws to humanity. Thus he played the role of a divine representative who applied the laws of his Master in all aspects of life. Consequently, obeying the Prophet (peace be upon him) is the same as obeying Allah.\(^9\) The Quran declares that the commandments of Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him) are the

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\(^2\) Ibid 20:6; 30:26; 7:54; 32:5.
\(^4\) Ibid, 6:164; 7:54; 114:1-3.
\(^8\) Ibid, 4:60, 65; 24:48, 51.
\(^9\) Ibid, 4:80.
supreme law and therefore Muslims are obliged to unconditionally obey them.\textsuperscript{10}

After Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) those in authority must be obeyed. The \textit{khalīfah} is not allowed to command anything that is against Islam and if he does, the citizens are allowed to disobey him; citizens have the right to disagree with him and such differences are to be adjudicated on the basis of the Quran and the \textit{Sunnah}.\textsuperscript{11}

Managing the affairs of the state is not a matter of authority, but a trust which has been given by Allah.\textsuperscript{12} The \textit{khilāfah} should have two major objectives: establishing justice\textsuperscript{13} and propagating good and eradicating evil from the land.\textsuperscript{14} Therefore its responsibility is to be entrusted to those who are Muslim\textsuperscript{15} and have the mental and physical capacity to run, are knowledgeable, competent and efficient; not a fool and ignoramus.\textsuperscript{16} The \textit{shūra} (consultative body) is an important component of \textit{al-khilāfah}. Everything in the Islamic state is to be decided by mutual consultation.\textsuperscript{17}

Based on the above political principles which were derived from the Quran and the \textit{Sunnah}, Muslim thinkers formulated their thought. They came forward with their expositions and formulations in the light of the Quran, the \textit{Sunnah}, the consensus of the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon
him) and analogy (qiyās). The history of Islam presents a variety of views of scholars on Islamic political thought. Some of them wrote mirrors for princes or counsels for rulers which were manuals prescribing the conduct of rulers, officials and subjects.

2. Muslim Rule in India

Muslim rule in Sind was according to the general norms adopted by Arab Muslim conquerors in other areas. During the short rule of Muhammad bin Qasim (712-715 C.E.), there was a discussion on the status of Indian non-Muslims, i.e. Hindus and Buddhists (who were not as People of the Book i.e. Ahl al-Kitāb). The ‘ulama ruled to treat them as the People of the Book and protect them as dhimmis (protected minority under an Islamic state). Further, the matter of repairing a damaged temple came up. Muhammad bin Qasim referred the question to Hajjaj bin Yusuf, the governor of Iraq, who discussed it with the ‘ulama of Damascus and granted permission declaring that non-Muslims are free to repair religious places as long as they pay their taxes to the state.18

Muhammad bin Qasim banned slaughtering of cows in Multan and Sind. It could have been for preserving the cattle wealth, but it is generally understood to be a step to protect the sentiments of the dhimmis.19 The civil administration was mostly handled by local chiefs who had not embraced Islam.20

Politically, the policies of Muhammad bin Qasim in Multan and Sind had a far reaching impact in the subcontinent. These formed the basis for framing policies towards non-Muslims in the later period. S.M. Ikram points out:

“By the time Muslim rule was established at Lahore and Delhi, Islamic law had been codified and contained stringent provisions regarding idol-worshippers. The fact that those provisions were not followed and the Hindus were treated as ‘people of the book’ was largely due to the fact they had been given this status by Muhammad bin Qasim and that for centuries this liberal practice had been built up in Sind and Multan.”

There is no detailed record of Multan and Sind after the return of Muhammad bin Qasim, but some accounts of geographers and Arab travellers report that the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims was good. The travellers referred to them as dhimmis, not as kāfirs (infidels) unlike most historians of the later period.

The second phase of Muslim conquest in India starts with the attacks of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (r. 997-1030). He repeatedly raided India and plundered its wealth particularly which was accumulated in its temples. This created a bad impression among natives, as Al-Biruni writes:

“Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed wonderful exploits by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims. This is the reason, too, why Hindu sciences have retired far away

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22 Ibid, p. 17.
from those parts of the country conquered by us and have fled to places which our hand cannot yet reach, to Kashmir, Benares, and other places.”

A new era of Muslim rule in India started in the last decade of the twelfth century in which a great empire not ruled from Ghazna or Ghūr, but from Lahore and Delhi was built by the Ghūrids. Soon after assuming power, Qutub al-Din Aybak (d. 1210) appointed a son of Prithviraj Chawhan (r. 1178-1192) as the governor of Ajmer, in conformity with Muhammad bin Qasim’s policy of appointing local chiefs as governors.

The position of idolatrous Hindus in the state was a crucial problem faced by Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 1211-1236). The ‘ulama urged him that no school of jurisprudence, except the Hanafi, permits to appoint dhimmis in key posts. However, the policies initiated by Muhammad bin Qasim proved more practical. Sultan Iltutmish assembled the ‘ulama and assigned his minister Nizam al-Mulk Junaidi to explain the matter. The minister argued that as India had been conquered recently and as the majority of Indians were Hindus, adopting such a course of action would not be wise and might lead to disturbances. The argument was accepted and the status quo was continued.

The historian Ḍiyā’ al-Din-Barani (1285-1357) wrote that two works, Ādāb al-Salāṭīn and Ma‘āṣir al-Salāṭīn, were brought from Baghdad during the reign of Emperor Iltutmish. The emperor was also assisted by scholars well-versed in political thought and statecraft. Ādāb al-Harb wa al-Shujā‘ah (Rules of Warfare and Bravery) or Ādāb al-Mulūk wa Kifāyat al-Mamlūk

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25 Ibid. p. 48.
26 S. M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 46.
(Rules for Kings and Welfare of Subjects) by Fakhr-i Mudabbir (1157-1236), most probably the earliest work on Islamic political thought from India, was dedicated to the emperor.

Emperor Ghiyas al-Din Balban (r. 1266-1286) was influenced by the Persian theory of kingship. He tried to raise his status as a sultan far above that of nobles believing that kingship was the highest office, next only to prophethood. He also argued that ensuring peace and tranquility within his dominion was the primary duty of the ruler. In the subsequent periods of the Delhi Sultanate, the policies of Sultan Iltutmish and Balban were followed.

Mughal political policies and programs were influenced by the policies of Sultan Balban, but had their own features too. In the Mughal system the ruler remained all-powerful, but he was not an autocrat.

The most authoritative theory on kingship during the period of Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605), the real founder of the Mughal Empire, was that provided by Abu al-Fazl, the closest companion of the emperor. In the preface of his ‘Ain-i Akbari, he repeats the policy of Sultan Balban, observing that the duty of the king is maintaining order and suppressing crime and injustice throughout his dominion. Then he emphasizes the divine nature of kingship by asserting that:

“Royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun, the illuminator of the universe.” He repeatedly calls the king ‘the shadow of God’, which may have been derived from mystical writings. This idea of

27 Ibid, pp. 56, 58.
28 Ibid, pp. 149-150.
paternal government was constantly emphasized by Emperor Akbar and his successors. It was similar to the ancient Indian notion of the king being mother and father of his subjects.\textsuperscript{30} As their father, the Mughal Emperor was a trustee of his subjects’ welfare.

During the medieval period most of the rulers exhibit a tendency to adopt principles of their own and do not attempt to strictly adhere to Islamic rulings. They formulated state laws (\textit{zawābit}) along with the \textit{sharī‘ah}. They also framed state-mediated punishments (\textit{ta’zir}) together with that is prescribed by Allah (\textit{hudūd}). The abolition of \textit{jizyah} during the period of Emperor Akbar is an example of implementing \textit{zawābit}. Once, when Ala al-Din Khilji (r. 1196-1316) was asked about the place of religion in his policy he answered, “I do not know whether these orders are in conformity with the \textit{sharī‘ah} or contrary to it, whatever I consider to be for the good of the administration and expedient, that I decree.”\textsuperscript{31}

Emperor Aurangazeb tried to follow Islamic principles in the affairs of state. He believed that rule is a trust from God. He enforced \textit{jizyah}, abolishing all other taxes which were being levied in India, but were not authorized by the \textit{sharī‘ah}. The policies of the emperor were in accordance with the \textit{sharī‘ah} and evolved with time, but they were a departure from the political traditions of the Mughals and from the policies followed hitherto by most of the Muslim sultans in India.\textsuperscript{32}

The stable and united Mughal Empire was shaken towards the end of the long reign of Emperor Aurangazeb, but his fortitude prevented any serious

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{32}S. M. Ikram, \textit{Muslim Civilization in India}, pp. 198-199.
violation of law and order, and the situation was kept under control. The death of Aurangzeb is considered to be the end of the era of the great Mughals.

The condition of Mughal India was extremely pathetic in the post-Aurangzeb era. The period was characterized by political instability and insecurity. Looting and pillage, violence and conflicts were prevalent everywhere. The period of supreme authority of the Mughal ruler came to an end and a new era of the supremacy of kingmakers began. As the weakened Mughal authority was not able to militarily enforce rules and regulations in all parts of the empire, many regional governors and kingdoms which had been subjugated by the early Mughals, claimed independence. Some regional groups emerged like the Marathas, Jats, Sikhs and Rajputs etc. and consolidated their political power. People had to suffer much at their hands due to the disintegration of the Mughal Empire.

Nadir Shah attacked Delhi in 1739 with a well-trained army. They mercilessly slaughtered the inhabitants of Delhi and looted and plundered their property. Around twenty thousand people, including women, children and old men, were killed in the massacre. This speeded up the disintegration of the empire.

This occurred during the lifetime of Shah Wali Allah Dehlawi (1703-1762), a great Islamic scholar of the Indian subcontinent. He made efforts to end the ills of the period and to strengthen Islam.

34 Ibid, p. 144.
3. Discourses on Islamic Political Thought in India

Evaluating Islamic political thought in India there are some discourses over the general principles of governance and the techniques of state-craft before Shah Wali Allah Dehlawi (1703-1762).

3.1. Fakhr-i Mudabbir

Fakhr al-Din Muhammad bin Mansur Mubarak Shah al-Quraishi, popularly known as Fakhr-i Mudabbir (1157-1236 C.E.), a Persian writer and contemporary of Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 1211-1236), was most probably the first Indian scholar who wrote on Islamic political thought. His work deals with the qualities and responsibilities of a ruler and his chief officials, merits of jihād and the proper method of waging war etc.

He writes that there are two categories of people in a state, the first being the individual with selfish motives. He is greedy, materialist and a transgressor of divine boundaries and therefore he is to be considered as a ẓālim (it means aggressor). The second category includes the individual who considers the interests of fellow beings, submits himself to Allah and follows in the footsteps of the Prophet (peace be upon him), therefore he is a true Muslim. Applying the same standards to the government, Fakhr-i Mudabbir explains that a state can be oppressive when the greed of its ruler and officials leads to the exploitation of the weak. Likewise it will be just when the altruism of its ruler and officials leads to prosperity.35

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35 Sunil Kumar, “The Value of Ādāb al-Mulūk as a Historical Source: An Insight into the Ideals and Expectations of Islamic Society in the Middle Period (A.D. 945-1500)” http://www.academia.edu/1266119/_The_value_of_the_Ādāb_al-Mulūk_wa_Kifāyat_al-Mamlūk_as_a_historical_source_an_insight_into_the_ideals_and_expectations_of_Islamic_society_in_the_Middle_period_945-1500_ (accessed on 12-02-2016), p. 310.
The state has many administrative organs which are interconnected and dependent on each other. The exploitation of one organ by another inevitably destroys the entire state and results in insecurity and disharmony throughout the realm. Hence the ruler and his officials are obliged to ensure that no one is exploited under their rule. If this is ensured, it results in security, peace and material prosperity in this world and salvation in the Hereafter.\textsuperscript{36}

Fakhr-i Mudabbir demonstrates several forms of justice: proper administration of different departments of the state, auditing of revenue returns, gathering of intelligence, preservation of law and order etc. In all these spheres justice cannot be properly enforced unless the ruler and officials possess morality and altruism. The rewards of the altruism and unselfish activities of the ruler and officials are reaped by them and the people under their administration. Likewise their selfish and covetous activities afflict both others and themselves.

According to Fakhr-i Mudabbir there are eight chief aides of a ruler. They are: \textit{wazīr} (helper of the king), \textit{murāqib} (comptroller), \textit{mushrif} (inspector), \textit{šāhib-i barīd} (post master and director of intelligence), \textit{wakīl} (deputy of the king), \textit{amīr-i ḥājib} (chamberlain), \textit{amīr-i dād} (minister of justice) and \textit{rasūl} (envoy). Narrating the story of the Prophet Yusuf, he argues that God is with those who fulfill their responsibilities unselfishly. Therefore, officials are required to be honest and altruist while the covetous official is required to fear the Day of Judgment.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[36] Ibid, p. 311.
\item[37] Ibid, pp. 312-314; Muzaffar Alam, \textit{The Languages of Political Islam in India} (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2004) p. 31.
\end{footnotes}
According to Fakhr-i Mudabbir, if a ruler or governor intends to enforce justice in his realm, God will bless him. Then Allah will shower down rain as blessings, the springs, streams and canals will be full, there will be abundance of crops and the land will be safe and prosperous. Likewise the opposite will happen if he intends oppression and extortion.38

The rank of amīr-i dād in a state is next to the king. The amīr-i dād is obliged to be cautious of officials who misuse their posts, spies and enemies who reveal confidential information and merchants who raise prices by hoarding goods. He should set up courts of justice throughout the realm and appoint honest officers in these and undertake activities to reform criminals and ensure the safety of streets.

The duty of advising the ruler and auditing of revenue returns is a sacred responsibility in a state because even God, the ultimate accountant, has a comptroller, the angel Mīkāūl, who is entrusted with rainfall and the responsibility of ensuring provision to mankind. Hence the comptroller is required to be well-trained or at least from a family of comptrollers so that they would have directly been exposed to the nuances of accountancy. Citing the history of the Egyptian Pharaoh Rayān Walīd and his comptroller Yusuf al-Ṣiddīq, Fakhr-i Mudabbir believed that a capable individual without selfish motives would be able to ensure prosperity of the people.39

The ruler is required to be updated with the daily reports and news of the realm. For this he has to maintain a transparent register. Ṣāḥib-i barīd (post master and director of intelligence), who is chosen for this task, should be

38 Sunil Kumar, “The Value of Ādāb al-Mulūk as a Historical Source: An Insight into the Ideals and Expectations of Islamic Society in the Middle Period (A.D. 945-1500)”, p. 313.
God-fearing, honest, trustworthy and shrewd. Fakhr-i Mudabbir referred to him as a pillar of the state.\textsuperscript{40}

According to Fakhr-i Mudabbir there should be a ‘circle of justice’ which binds every department of the state and society, including the notables, army and the peasantry etc. because all of them are dependent upon each other. The exploitation of one department by another destroys the entire system and results in famine and other catastrophes.\textsuperscript{41}

The lifetime of Fakhr-i-Mudabbir was a period of simultaneous Mongol peril from abroad and strong internal resistance as it was a newly conquered territory. Consequently, his thought reflects the consciousness of insecurity. Therefore, the central theme of his political thought is the survival of Muslim political power in India. Hence he transplanted certain ideas of Nizam al-Mulk, the Saljūq prime minister, especially about the monopoly of Muslims over high posts in the state administration.\textsuperscript{42} According to him the primary function of the state is protecting and promoting the \textit{sharī‘ah} and safeguarding the interests of its Muslim subjects.\textsuperscript{43} He also stated that if any city of a Muslim territory is besieged by non-Muslim enemies, even a Muslim slave and Muslim woman are obliged to partake in the battle of defence without seeking permission from their master and guardian respectively.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, pp. 316-317.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p. 320.
\textsuperscript{43} Muzaffar Alam, \textit{The Languages of Political Islam in India}, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{44} Aziz Ahmad, “Trends in the Political Thought of Medieval Muslim India”, p. 122.
In the case of *dhimmis*, Fakhr-i Mudabbir’s stand seems uncompromising because according to him they don’t have the right to ride horses.\textsuperscript{45} Those who turn away from Islam i.e. renegades and apostates, and maintain their heresy for more than three days are to be forced to return to the fold of Islam and if they refuse, men are to be executed and women are to be imprisoned. The *amīr-i dād* is obliged to provide consideration well-being of Muslim citizens.\textsuperscript{46} Yet, he has to keep in mind that non-Muslims are *dhimmis* and to be protected.\textsuperscript{47}

### 3.2. Ḍiyā’ al-Din Barani

Ḍiyā’ al-Din Barani (1285-1357 C.E.) was a courtier and favorite companion of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq (r. 1325-1351), but was not favored by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-1388) who banished him from the court and imprisoned him for a short period of time. After that he lived an underprivileged life of poverty.

Ḍiyā’ al-Din Barani’s political thought carries some personal motives.\textsuperscript{48} He tried to uphold his position by slamming new ideas. Consequently his prejudices and self-interests reflect in his ideas, but the opinions on the roles and responsibilities of rulers and dignitaries are remarkable. The political thought of Ḍiyā’ al-Din Barani is different from that of Fakhr-i Mudabbir, which is inspired by good sense, moderation and practical idealism.\textsuperscript{49}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, pp. 29-31.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought from the Prophet to the Present*, p. 165.
\item \textsuperscript{49} S. M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, pp. 87-88.
\end{itemize}
Ḍiyā’ al-Din Barani recognized that the Iranian pattern of governance (pādshāhi) is a sin and the ruler who adopts this style of governance is a sinner because there is complete contradiction between the Sunnah and the Iranian emperor’s mode of living. The true religion calls upon us to follow the footsteps of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Hence a good ruler is required to follow the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and fulfill his religious responsibilities as taught by the Prophet (peace be upon him), so that he can ensure his success in this world and the hereafter. However, certain political scenarios demand a qualified candidate to follow the Iranian pattern in order to assume power and maintain his authority in the dominion. After the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, no ruler has successfully assumed power and ruled in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Only the pious Caliphs were able to combine both kingship and poverty in the post-Prophetic era. Kingship is the niyābah (deputyship) and khilāfah (vicegerency) of God. Therefore the king, on undertaking powers, has to utilize it for certain objectives, such as: protecting Islam, enforcing the commands of religion, enforcing justice etc.\(^{50}\)

According to Barani, the king is not beyond the rules of his government. Therefore, first of all, he himself has to set an example by obeying the rules which he intends to impose on others. There is no Islam without justice. It aims to protect the weak and to prevent oppression.\(^{51}\)

Ḍiyā’ al-Din Barani is the first Indian scholar to acknowledge the prerequisite of formulating zawābit (state laws or secular laws) in addition to Islamic laws. He stated that if the king is unable to act according to prevalent


\(^{51}\) Ibid, pp. 16-18.
Islamic rules and regulations, he is permitted to convene well-wishers of the realm and frame new laws, but only after careful discussion. They have to assure that the new laws neither negate the commands of the *shari‘ah*; nor are they a burden, source of hatred or trouble. The precedents for the new laws should be learnt from the rule of earlier kings who upheld Islamic principles in their legislation. The ruler is obliged to ensure that the implementation of *zawābit* do not pave the way for reviving the traditions of tyrants and irreligious rulers. He is also allowed to implement the same if he feels that he is unable to fully implement the *shari‘ah*. Then his intention should be gradual implementation of all the rules and regulations of the *shari‘ah.*

Due to the self-interest and prejudice of Ḍiyā’ al-Din Barani, his political thought endorses high-birth. According to Barani, political acumen, statesmanship and administrative skills are genetic traits, not acquired ones. Frequent changes in the administration ruin the empire, while heredity ensures political stability. The Sassanid rule is a case in point. Therefore, he proposes the hereditary kingship for ensuring the stability of the Muslim state and to protect and promote the interests of the Muslim community. According to him, vices dominate in the low-born. If God has chosen to honor a person with noble birth, greatness, excellence and ability, the ruler will also be obliged to honor the person. A low-born who is supposed to be created with ignorance, sin and rascalit is required to be treated in a manner suiting him. Barani argued that being created a slave is God’s indication of the degraded position of the individual. A ruler treating a slave or any other

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53 Ibid, pp. 64; 97-99.
low-born with undue honor will thus be answerable to God as he has disregarded God’s will.\(^{54}\)

The idea of high-birth is not derived from the teachings of Islam which strictly prohibits discrimination of mankind on the basis of class, color or birth. Allah says in the Quran that each and every progeny of Haḍrat Āda is honored by Him\(^{55}\) and there is no such privilege by birth in the Quran, the Sunnah or writings of early scholars of Islam.

Barani affirmed that God has created everything in yoked pairs. The identification of anything in this temporal world is not possible without the existence of its corresponding antithesis. Virtues are considered as virtues because of vices. Hence virtues and vices are heterogeneously distributed in all human beings, but the former dominates the latter only in some people. Barani requires rulers to abstain themselves from vices, so that they will be able to rule in an Islamic way.\(^{56}\)

A good ruler cannot be content with levying taxes, rather he has to work hard to establish Islam as supreme and to safeguard it from aggressors. Barani asks rulers to expel or suppress philosophers from the court because they are rationalists who do not believe in the Day of Judgment; prefer reason over religion, deny the class system and influence rulers to appoint all sorts of people to high offices on merit. He says that Muhammad bin


\(^{55}\) Al-Quran 17:70.

\(^{56}\) P. Hardy, “Unity and Variety in Indo-Islamic and Perso-Islamic Civilization: Some Ethical and Political Ideas of Ḍiyā al-Dīn Barānī of Delhi, of al-Ghazālī and of Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī Compared”, pp. 127-129.
Tughlaq seemed an oppressor at the end of his reign because of paying heed to the advice of court philosophers.\textsuperscript{57}

Since majority of Indians were unbelievers, Barani permitted the appointment of non-Muslims in the state service on grounds of necessity.\textsuperscript{58} Sometimes his idea of justice also reveals dimensions of mercy and clemency, such as the suggestion to refrain from the collection of jizyah when the crop fails and to distribute the state funds to the non-Muslim needy.\textsuperscript{59} He also warns rulers of the divine punishment for shedding the blood of innocents and confiscating their property.\textsuperscript{60}

Barani sought to exclude Brahmins from the status of ahl al-dhimmah, providing them the choice of embracing Islam or perpetual war. It was most probably due to the fact that this class of Hindus had high privileges in the social and political structure of India, particularly as ministers and royal advisors etc. and was perhaps thus perceived as threats to Barani’s kinfolk in general and to his position in particular. Thus, his personal interests could have influenced him in his policies.\textsuperscript{61}

3.3. Mir Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadāni

The Kashmiri sūfī missionary Mir Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadāni (1314-1384) discusses Islamic principles of governance, and qualities and responsibilities of a ruler in the light of the Islamic shari‘ah. He affirms that a ruler who

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid pp. 131-132.
\textsuperscript{58} Muzaffar Alam, \textit{The Languages of Political Islam in India}, pp. 36-39.
\textsuperscript{60} P. Hardy, “Unity and Variety in Indo-Islamic and Perso-Islamic Civilization: Some Ethical and Political Ideas of Ḍiyā al-Dīn Baranī of Delhi, of al-Ghazālī and of Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī Compared”, pp. 132-133.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid
does not have a lenient attitude towards his subjects and transgresses the boundaries of the *sharī‘ah* is the enemy of Islam and a caliph of the devil.\(^{62}\)

Mīr Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadānī says that a Muslim monarch does not have more rights and privileges than his subjects. He is obliged to follow the four Pious Caliphs. His primary responsibility is to protect his Muslim subjects. He is not allowed to transgress the boundaries of Islamic law. He has to seek the company of pious and sincere ‘*ulama* and ignore the false ones. He has to administer justice according to the teachings of Islam and *firāsah* (the idea of *firāsah* was first introduced by Nizam al-Mulk, the Saljuq prime minister. It implies the necessity of insight, lucidity and discernment in a ruler).\(^{63}\)

Mir Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadānī enumerates justice, benevolence and kindliness as the major requisites to be adopted by a ruler and his government. Allah commands his bondsmen to leave the path of evil, cruelty and injustice. Rulers are obliged to protect the rights of the ruled. They are also required to act with tolerance and forgiveness.\(^{64}\)

Mir Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadānī says that promoting and strengthening Islam is the basic function of the government. It is obliged to provide justice to Muslims by implementing the *sharī‘ah* in the realm. Yet, non-Muslim subjects have the right to follow their religion. Everyone enjoys the compassion of Allah irrespective of their faith; nonetheless, a Muslim ruler must treat non-Muslims differently, prescribing for them certain dress codes

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\(^{62}\) Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, p. 44.

\(^{63}\) Aziz Ahmad, “Trends in the Political Thought of Medieval Muslim India”, p. 127.

and certain other manifestations, but as they are *ahl al-dhimma*, the ruler is obliged to protect their life and property.\(^65\)

In the case of the *ahl al-dhimma*, Mir Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadānī follows the policy of Hazrat ‘Umar who is reported to have encouraged Muslims of his reign to be different from non-Muslims in clothing and appearance,\(^66\) so that if any drunkard or a gambler (drinking alcohol and gambling were prohibited for Muslims and allowed for dhimmis) were seen in the public place, officials could take action against him if he was a Muslim and leave him if he was a dhimmi.

### 3.4. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi

Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thani Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624) was the most influential thinker of India before Shah Wali Allah Dehlawi. He wrote letters to leading nobles of Emperor Jahangir. The open letters were entitled *Maktūbāt-i Imam Rabbāni* (*Letters of the Divine Guide*). They are relevant in the sphere of Islamic political thought in India.

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi undertook the task of strengthening Islam during his lifetime. He criticized the then condition of India. He realized that a rebellion might not strengthen Islam whatsoever. He thus denounced Emperor Akbar’s policy of ‘eclecticism’\(^67\) and rather expected a revolutionary approach during the reign of his son and successor Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-1627). He declared that the latter’s rule started with a great possibility of progress towards Islam, such that all scholars and nobles were required to make their maximum effort to strengthen Islam. Shaykh Ahmad

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\(^{65}\) Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, pp. 43-45.


Sirhindi also met Emperor Jahangir many times and he served as his court advisor during the last four years of his lifetime, after his release from Gwalior fort in 1620 C.E. He believed that the primary duty of the ruler was to rule according to the Quran and the Sunnah.

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi exhorted the nobles to double their efforts to restore the former glory of Islam and strictly implement the *sharī‘ah* throughout the realm while in some of his letters he encouraged *sūfīs* and ‘*ulama* to associate with the royal court to strengthen Islam, in others he said that devout Muslims must keep away from the company of rulers and flee from them like they would flee from lions. Thus he reminded religious scholars of their responsibilities for running the state according to the *sharī‘ah* and sought from ordinary Muslims to keep away from things which might prompt them to support corruption and other anti-state elements.

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi asked the ruler to appoint *qādīs* in all the cities of realm to ensure justice everywhere. He declares that the participation of non-Muslims in the Mughal administration is illegitimate. He also persuaded rulers to impose *jizyah* on *dhimmis*. Thus Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi tried to further strengthen Islam in the realm by ruthlessly attacking all non-godly elements which were prevalent in the Mughal reign.

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68 I. H. Qureshi, ‘*Ulama in Politics*, pp. 95-96.
72 Ibid pp. 69-75.
3.5. Qādi Nūr al-Dīn Khāqāni

Another political thinker of the reign of Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) was Qādi Nūr al-Dīn Khāqāni (d. 1633). According to him the major object of governance is justice, not implementation of Islamic law or *kufr* (infidelity). He observed that a non-Muslim just ruler is better than an unjust Muslim. For instance, the rulers of ancient Persia were fire-worshippers, but had ruled for five thousand years because of their intolerance towards injustice.\(^\text{73}\)

He noted that constant surveillance of the affairs of the domain and keeping an equal attitude towards all subjects are necessary for a good ruler.\(^\text{74}\) He also listed qualities such as insight, rationalism and discernment as the ruler’s key to solve all political crises.\(^\text{75}\)

3.6. Muhammad Baqir Khan

Muhammad Baqir Khan (d. 1637) was a well-known political thinker who had migrated to India from Iran during the reign of either Emperor Akbar or Emperor Jahangir. He served the Mughals as the governor of Bihar, Bengal, Gujarat, Delhi, Orissa, Jaunpur and Allahabad. He was acknowledged by his contemporaries as a prolific writer in political thought and capable administrator.\(^\text{76}\)

Muhammad Baqir Khan emphasizes the necessity of adherence to the *shari‘ah* in the administrative policies of a ruler. According to him the major

\(^{73}\) Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, pp. 71-74.

\(^{74}\) Ibid

\(^{75}\) Aziz Ahmad, “Trends in the Political Thought of Medieval Muslim India”, pp. 121; 130.

objective of a ruler is dispensing justice throughout his reign. He is to be associated with ‘ulamā’ and capable advisors who can provide him proper guidance on statecraft. He divided the functions of the court into four categories: ministers, generals, intelligence officers and administrators of justice. He opined that none should hold more than one post in the administration.\textsuperscript{77}

Muhammad Baqir Khan’s political thought upheld the concept of high-birth. He said that rulers are required to discriminate between low-born men and those who have a higher lineage, because the former are unworthy and possess more vices than virtues, whereas the latter are a treasure of abilities and wisdom which are to be utilized for administrative purposes. There are three classes of people in a society, the lowest, the medium and the upper class and all the classes are totally different in character. Hence, the ruler is required to prevent low-born men from high offices even if they have acquired a high standard of knowledge. Having acquired higher formal education, they might leave their profession and join the government services. This would result in disorder in the whole social structure. He encourages the acquisition of knowledge only for the high-born, as he believed it would help them refine themselves. He contended that the low-born have an inner vile and base nature, so they do not possess sincerity and piety which form the base of intellect and the capacity to govern.\textsuperscript{78} It is again impossible to find the roots of his arguments in Muhammad Baqir Khan’s study of religion because the Quran and the Sunnah clearly state that there is no such division in Islam; therefore it may be derived from his own assumptions or the influence of the chatur varna doctrine of Hinduism.

\textsuperscript{77} Aziz Ahmad, “Trends in the Political Thought of Medieval Muslim India”, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{78} William Theodore De Bary, Sources of Indian Tradition (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963) pp. 517-518.
3.7. ‘Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlawi

Through his letters, ‘Abd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlawi (1551-1642) criticized Akbar’s (r. 1556-1605) political and religious policies. He emphasized the requirement of consensus (ijmā’) of Islamic scholars in the affairs of the government. He proclaimed that the true caliphate is confined to the four Pious Caliphs.79 His influence on in the Mughal realm would have been better recognized had it not been obscured by the effort of his great contemporary Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), better known as Reviver of Second Millennium (Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thani).80

4. Conclusion

Islam is a comprehensive faith which provides guidance in all spheres of life. The main concern of Allah on earth is the welfare of mankind. Everything in the world is created for man.81 However the Quran and the Sunnah do not provide a precise or fixed political thought, rather they set forth only its fundamental principles. Muslim scholars have pondered over these principles and interpreted them through the ages. Most of them have only dealt with some of its important elements.

Islamic political thought in India was developed on the basis of the policies adopted by Muhammad bin Qasim in Sind and Multan. Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish pondered over them and re-affirmed it with the consensus of his contemporary Muslim scholars of India. Further, Sultan Ghiyas al-Din Balban also adopted certain elements from the ancient Persian theory of kingship and made some minor changes in the policy. It was followed in subsequent periods. Mughal governance in India was deeply influenced by

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79 Aziz Ahmad, “Trends in the Political Thought of Medieval Muslim India”, p. 128.
81 Al-Quran 2:29.
the policies of rulers of the Delhi Sultanate, but it had some unique features too. Influenced by the ancient Indian concept of considering the king as the mother and father of the ruled, an idea of paternal government was highlighted by Emperor Akbar, the real founder of the Mughal dynasty, and his successors. The policies of Emperor Aurangazeb who believed that governance was a trust from Allah, were a departure from the political traditions of his political ancestors, the Mughals. By the time of the emperor’s death, the condition of India was extremely pathetic and the supremacy of Mughal rulers was replaced by a period of kingmakers.

All the discourses of Islamic political thought in India emphasize the necessity of ensuring justice. It shows that these are derived from the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah which have a great deal of emphasis on justice. However in those aspects on which the Quran and the Sunnah are silent, scholars employed their rationale. It sometimes led them to adopt certain un-Islamic ideas as well. For instance the political thought of Ḑiyā’ al-Din Barani and Muhammad Baqir Khan upheld the concept of high-birth which is totally un-Islamic because Islam does not promote any discrimination on the basis of birth, class or color and the only privilege before God is piety.